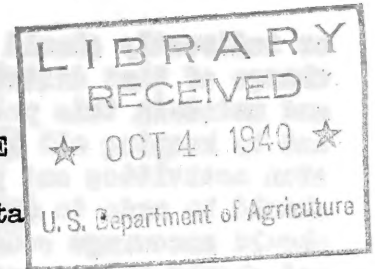


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United States Department of Agriculture
E X T E N S I O N S E R V I C E
Washington, D. C.



INTERSTATE SUPERVISORY CONFERENCE

Rocky Reef Lodge, Onamia, Minnesota

June 17, 1940

Topic I: Responsibilities of Extension Supervisors and Project Leaders

H. G. Gould, Nebraska, Chairman
L. A. Jensen, North Dakota, Secretary
J. L. Hill, South Dakota, Secretary

Problem:

In some States, situations have arisen where there seems to be an overlapping of responsibilities of extension supervisors and leaders of the newer programs. State extension employees or cooperative employees, who may in some States be connected with the administrative staff of the Extension Service and designated as State leaders of various programs, such as Land Use Planning, ACP, SCS, REA, Grasshopper Control, Weed Control, etc., sometimes seem to assume supervisory roles in their contacts with county extension agents. This is confusing to the county extension agents and hampers effective extension supervision and the conducting of a well-balanced extension program in the counties.

Suggestions:

Responsibilities of extension supervisors have increased greatly during recent years.

Reports by States indicate that the problem can be solved by careful organization and cooperative effort.

Difficulties usually arise between individuals rather than between agencies, and the problem is largely one of coordinating personalities and developing an understanding of the responsibilities and functions of the different members of the staff.

Organization is different in each State, and it is impossible to list and discuss specific cases. The supervisor should discuss these problems with his extension director and follow the policies which the director establishes for solving these matters of relationship.

In general, an extension supervisor is responsible to the State director of extension for all extension organization and programs in his counties. All activities involving the county extension agent either directly

or indirectly should be channeled through the extension supervisor in charge of that district. The extension supervisor can do much to encourage and maintain this policy by always being alert, cooperative, and helpful, and by keeping all leaders of action programs well-informed on other extension activities and plans affecting the work of these leaders. Every effort should be made to develop confidence and cooperation. Extension supervisors should encourage county extension agents to lead in all educational programs and should help agents to keep representatives of action programs properly informed of plans and procedure to be followed by the agent.

Land use planning is helpful in obtaining the full cooperation of all agency representatives. Land use planning furnishes a general guide in developing the programs of all agencies including Extension. The extension supervisor should assist county extension agents in every way to bring this about.

Land use planning may be a long-time job, but too much delay in getting under way is not desirable. We think some land use planning should be started in all counties as soon as possible.

Topic II: Increasing the Effectiveness of County Agent Work

W. E. Dittmer, South Dakota, Chairman
R. M. Douglas, Minnesota, Secretary
R. A. Spence, Nebraska, Secretary

Problem: Increased demands upon the time of the county agricultural agent are causing him to divide his time among an increasing number of activities, is changing the type of work being done, and may force him to work longer hours than is consistent with efficiency and good health.

Suggestions:

1. Delegation of certain responsibilities to local leaders.

There is a desire on the part of some agents to handle all details themselves. District agents can assist them to choose activities which the agents must handle and those which may be delegated to local leaders. Leaders need not always be farmers; such townspeople as key bankers, secretaries of chambers of commerce, and civic club leaders can often be used effectively in certain special activities.

2. Effective use of leaders.

The effective use of leaders is closely related to the delegation of responsibility. Nearly every community has persons who are specialists in certain lines. Agents may

often obtain their cooperation by giving them responsibility for doing a job in which they are especially interested. It may be necessary to give them some training in how to do it.

3. Agents need help in training leaders.

District agents should make available more assistance to county agents in training leaders. The Ohio farm unit schools where 3 to 5 farmers from each township meet at the county seat for a series of 5 all-day meetings conducted at 1-week intervals by 5 different specialists on topics related to the organization and operation of the farm and farm home unit is a good example of leader training technique. Nebraska reports good results achieved in Fillmore County by having leaders meet the specialists and take materials back to the people in their respective communities. It should be kept in mind that leader training involves both subject matter and method. The Agricultural Conservation Program has developed many leaders by giving them a job to do rather than by holding leader training meetings as such. A handbook for leaders is most useful in building up their confidence and provides reference information.

4. Planning and Calendaring.

More assistance should be given county agents in planning and calendaring their work in advance. This promotes consideration of all the work to be done and provides opportunity to eliminate the less important activities. Preparing schedules of specialists well in advance promotes systematic planning and efficient use of funds.

5. Determine the most important problems and the real needs of local people through land use planning.

This emphasizes the desirability of working on major problems, and permits the local people to assist in determining the extension program. It may be necessary to abandon or omit some desirable but less important activities to release time for adequate work on those of greater significance.

6. Training county agents.

The question was raised if newly appointed agents are given enough training to develop their confidence. District conferences and assistance in the county with training in field and office procedures help prepare the agent. Experience as assistant county agent also tends to develop confidence. The

agent must always be well-informed on all agricultural problems in his county. Kansas holds 2- or 3-day outing conferences with agents and four or five specialists at which the details of work for the following year are planned. Many other States follow similar practices.

7. Outlines and visual aids.

Preparation of outlines, charts, series of slides, and other illustrative materials by specialists and others will lessen the agent's load.

8. Finances.

Inadequate financial support causes worry and lessens efficiency. This has always been a major concern of district agents.

9. Vacations.

Some supervisors urge their agents to take a day or two off occasionally for hunting, fishing, or other forms of relaxation. Vacations should be taken at opportune times.